

The International Federation for Emergency Medicine

Scott G. Weiner, MD MPH FAAEM
Chair, AAEM International Committee

On October 7th, 2009, a board meeting of the International Federation for Emergency Medicine (IFEM) was held in Boston. IFEM was founded in 1989 with the goal of promoting emergency medicine internationally. IFEM is an “organization of organizations,” in which countries with developed EM specialty groups can apply and become members. Currently, there are about 30 countries represented by the organization with more countries applying regularly.

IFEM allows one “full member” organization per country. The requirements are that the organization be the predominant specialty organization in the country, that the country has officially recognized EM as a medical specialty, and that it has at least one recognized EM training program. Additionally, there is a category for “affiliate members,” which are national organizations for practicing emergency physicians in countries where EM is not yet formally recognized or in which there may be additional national EM organizations for countries already represented by another organization. Affiliate organizations appoint one non-voting member to the board. In the U.S., ACEP is the full member, and AAEM is an affiliate member.

Every two years IFEM sponsors the International Conference on Emergency Medicine (ICEM). This is a large, multi-national conference with participants from around the globe. Until recently, ICEM was limited to English-speaking countries: U.S., Canada, Australia and England. But the 13th ICEM will take place in Singapore from June 9-12, 2010, and represents the first time it will be in Asia. This is a reflection of the expansion of emergency medicine globally. Future conferences will be in Ireland in 2012 and Hong Kong in 2014. If you are interested in attending a truly global conference in an exciting location, visit www.icem2010.org for more information.

There are several committees in IFEM to manage specific issues. There are committees on finance and governance to manage the organization. There is a specialty implementation committee to help develop the specialty of EM internationally, a guidelines working party to develop guidelines that can be used throughout the world. There is also an organizing committee for ICEM. Joe Lex, MD FAAEM, sits on the curriculum committee, which has already established guidelines for suggested curriculum of medical students interested in pursuing a career in emergency medicine. Guidelines for post-graduate/residency training are in the final stages of development. The next step will be the creation of continuing professional development guidelines.

At the meeting, several topics were discussed, including the organization's relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO), new ideas to help create certifying exams for countries that do not currently have a national board of EM and a presentation of a new, updated website of the organization. Furthermore, Dr. Jim Holliman was awarded IFEM's Humanitarian Award in recognition of his work related to international emergency medicine which has led to major humanitarian benefits. We congratulate him on this well-deserved honor.

It is not possible to become an individual member of IFEM, but IFEM represents the entirety of our specialty on an international level on behalf of our national organizations. This is important for every AAEM member to know about. When the World Health Organization needs to involve emergency medicine or a country needs resources to help them develop EM as a specialty, it is important to have an organization that transcends national borders. Furthermore, the organization serves as a clearinghouse for information such as guidelines, curricula, and also hosts a website in which conferences and classes held around the world (including AAEM's) are listed. For more information about IFEM, visit their website at www.ifem.cc.